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Can Culture and Inter-Organisational Change Attain Sustainable Development? Egalitarian Collaboration at Bournemouth University

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable development as part of the global perspectives' agenda has proved to be very popular within a range of topics that have been debating the future of the globe in the last decade. This has been due to its importance in shaping governmental and other policies at the national, supranational and international level. The beginning was post World War II with the increase in awareness of environmental issues and its concomitant social implications because of a series of dangerous incidents such as acid rain and deforestation in the 1980s and global warming in the 1990s and beyond (Shiel and Bunney, 2002). Subsequently, the notion has been linked to all these actions that could promote and further develop the social fabric of a society such as health, education, and the labour market. Taking into account certain limitations in financial and human resources sustainability and steady progress have appeared as a sine qua non for future plans regarding those fields of human activity.

Despite its further development through recent years the definition of sustainable development being given in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development has still had its advocates. According to this definition *sustainable development* is 'development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Shiel & Bunney, 2002; Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2005).

A holistic view on how sustainable development has been affecting a wide range of human activities is illustrated in Figure 1. According to this model natural capital – the biosphere, raw materials and solar energy – is transformed through science and technology into built and human capital such as machines, processed materials and human skills. Subsequently, built and human capital is transposed through political economy into human and social capital (consumer goods, education, transport, health and ultimately wealth). Finally, by means of theology and ethics human beings realise the ends of life including participation in community activities, setting personal identity, and obtaining fulfilment and happiness (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2005).

The importance of sustainable development can be understood, as in recent years substantial accumulation of evidence has suggested that human actions are undermining the capacity of the humanity to survive long into the future. Evidence of the degradation of natural capital is particularly strong including amongst others rapid climate change, ozone depletion, and toxic pollution. Consequently, human beings have failed to protect social capitals such as education, health, and therefore to support people's well-being (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2005).

Education as it would have been expected has offered room for implementing and achieving sustainable development. The reason for this has been the increasing awareness that people in education, especially students, need to engage with the wider world. In this respect, there is a necessity for preparing them 'for life and work in the 21st century'. Therefore, sustainable development can provide an understanding of the need for maintaining and improving the quality of life now without damaging the planet for future generations (Department of Education and Skills, 2004).

Ultimate ENDS		Well-being
	through theology and ethics	
Intermediate ENDS		Human/social capital
	through political economy	
Intermediate MEANS		Built/human capital
	through science and technology	
Ultimate MEANS		Natural capital

Figure 1. Systems view of the human conditions
Source: Adapted from Meadows, D (1999), Indicators and information systems for sustainable development, in D Satterthwaite, ed, The Earthscan reader in sustainable cities, as cited in Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2005: 5.

In this light, this paper sets the scene on how sustainable development can be achieved within the education, and in particular the Higher Education context in order to produce 'responsible global citizens'. In doing so, two explanatory theoretical frameworks are utilised, one of cultural theory and one of inter-organisational change. Based on those frameworks, a model for explaining sustainable development is suggested. The framework is called *egalitarian collaboration* and it will be examined via empirical research evidence.

2. CULTURE AND INTER-ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – THE EGALITARIAN COLLABORATION' FRAMEWORK

Engaging sustainable development in making education a system of global focus is a process consisted of multifarious tasks. Some of them include taking action to provide a strong global dimension into the learning experience; to transform capabilities in activities such as in speaking other languages than just English; and to equip people at work with skills needed for a global economy (Department of

Education and Skills, 2004). In this light, promoting a culture of global focus within education institutions and developing inter-organisational relationships are two elements that this paper considers as vital in developing sustainable development. Organisational changes that might be raised as a result of this can perhaps prove to be necessary in promoting a political, social, and economic agenda for sustainability.

In order to produce a culture change that could reflect the global focus in education a model of cultural theory has been used for this paper, the Grid/Group Cultural theory as it has been examined by Christopher Hood. He argues that the plurality of possible ways of managing or administering organisational structures relies on the organisational dimensions of *grid* and *group*. Grid denotes the degree to which people's lives are circumscribed by conventions or rules whereas group denotes the extent to which individual choice is constrained by group choice (Hood, 1998). An explanatory account of this approach is being presented in Table 1.

GRID		
	GROUP	
	Low	*High*
High	*The Fatalist Way* Low co-operation, rule-bound approaches to organisation *Example:* Atomised societies sunk in rigid routines	*The Hierarchist Way* Socially cohesive, rule-bound approaches to organisation *Example:* Stereotype military structures
Low	*The Individualist Way* Atomised approaches to organisation stressing negotiation and bargaining *Example:* Chicago-school doctrines of 'government by the market' and their antecedents	*The Egalitarian Way* High-participation structures in which every decision is 'up for grabs' *Example:* 'Dark green' doctrines of alternatives to conventional bureaucracy

Table 1. Styles of organisation in which cultural theory applies
Source: Hood, 1998: 9

The application of such an approach involves multiplicity of actors within the same context. Consequently, an explanation is needed in order to clarify the particular actions that are taken by these actors. In the light of this, an approach that can illuminate the relationships that are identified when developing sustainable development becomes apparent. Collaboration seems to be the most profound way as a vehicle that inter-links these mechanisms of culture and inter-organisational relationships. In this respect, collaboration can be seen as a useful mechanism when applied to joint activities of organisations as it expresses people's desire to come and act together (Apostolakis, 2005a).

Moreover, a framework that can perhaps reflect the above developments is the *framing concept*. The popularity of framing as a concept 'has come with the recognition that often two or more people who are involved in the same situation or in a complex problem see it or define it in different ways' (Lewicki et al, 1999; cited by Williams, 2005: 323). In this light, the main problem with focusing on frame awareness is the increased possibility of frame conflict and dilemma, as policy debates stem from multiple and in many cases conflicting viewpoints (Williams, 2005). However, conflict cannot necessarily count as a problem if it is channelled constructively through negotiation and at a more developed stage through collaboration.

Broadly, framing is understood to provide four main functions:
1. *Problem Identification* – to focus attention on particular situations or occurrences;
2. *Causality* – to infer a causal connection, and to attribute blame and responsibility;
3. *Prognosis* – to propose particular courses of action;
4. *Mobilising* – to launch a call for action (Williams, 2005: 324)

Based on the aforementioned a framework that could perhaps contribute to the debate of how three vital elements of Higher Education in Britain, the curriculum, students and university staff could broaden and increase the quality of their remits in order to engage with the new global developments is offered below. Cultural theory, collaboration and framing context constitute its theoretical elements. According to this framework, culture and inter-organisational changes are considered as prominent aspects and areas for investigation (Table 2). The question concerning in here urges for reply: Can culture and inter-organisational change support sustainable development in Higher Education?

ASPECTS FOR CONSIDERATION (Egalitarian Character of the Framework Established)		
	Issue/Problem Identification & Causality	Prognosis/Planning & Mobilising
CULTURE CHANGES		
Learning in a Global Context (Engaging with/Adapting to)	Curriculum: Lack of awareness on sustainability due to endemic organisational and other reasons University Staff: Lack of motives to engage and adapt to conditions of sustainability University Students: Obstacles in understanding and exploring new paths of learning	Curriculum: Inclusion of subjects that raise awareness on global issues, citizenship, and sustainability University Staff: Involvement in the new way of learning University Students: Transfer of knowledge according to new ways of learning
Promoting a Culture of Sustainable Development	Curriculum: Knowledge as a inert corpus because of inward looking University Staff: Inability to propose a culture of sustainability University Students: Acquiring knowledge based on an inward looking	Curriculum: Expanding the curriculum in terms of engaging groups as well as in terms of values, skills and knowledge University Staff: Building the capacity for managing sustainable development and transferring it to students University Students: Acquiring and developing a culture for sustainable development

INTER-ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES		
Working in Partnership	Curriculum: Lack of adapting into the today's partnership spirit at both national and supranational level due to an isolationist culture University Staff: Lack of understanding that diversity and collaboration can 'make the difference' University Students: Lack of interactive and multicultural learning	Curriculum: Establishment of partnership work in curricular and co-curricular activities at both national and supranational level University Staff: Planning and delivery of education that incorporates holistic participation University Students: Understanding of the usefulness of holistic participation
Contributing to Trade and Investment	Curriculum: Lack of ability to promote the role of the institution as an international hub for learning and research University Staff - University Students: Inability to adapt to learning activities with an international focus that could benefit the institution	Curriculum: Adapting the curricular and co-curricular activities in such a way as to permit maximisation of the overseas trade and inward investment University Staff - University Students: Ability to understand the institution's new role and work towards the achievement of its objectives

Table 2: The Egalitarian Collaboration framework

The framework perceives sustainable development rather on its intermediate characteristic of enhancing human/social capital (see Figure 1). It can also be considered as a checklist of issue/problem identification-causality and prognosis-mobilising. Needless to mention that issues of incomprehensiveness might arise regarding the framework, as its aspects offer a particular focus on developing sustainability via culture and inter-organisational changes and this can probably create problems of *generalisations*. As it can be understood this is only a small part of the remits sustainable development can be explored upon. Applicability of the framework will be sought in the context of Bournemouth University, as it is explored in chapter 4.

3. METHODOLOGY ISSUES

Bournemouth University was the field of empirical research for this paper. Interviewing and collection of secondary data occurred as the two research methods. Interviewees included members of staff (four in terms of numbers) re the issue of changing the university's volunteering agenda and three international students re changes in the curriculum that would bring the institution closer to a more 'global' profile. In addition, quantitative material from surveys for the Higher Education Active Community Fund (HEACF) project was also used.

4. BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY: ON THE WAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

There were two main issues to consider re the application of the egalitarian collaboration' framework in the context of Bournemouth University. These issues had a direct impact on the research findings that were acquired:

1. Culture and other attitudes can affect student life, as they were reflected on the interviews by international students – these attitudes refer more to how the university is perceived from outside e.g. by students who study at the university but they do not necessarily establish very close links with it.
2. Changes have occurred re volunteering activity within the university as an co-curricular activity for both students and members of staff – these changes are linked more with the university's internal 'face';

It could be argued that Bournemouth University has begun to develop mechanisms, which promote sustainable development and global perspectives. This, for example became apparent in the document A Global Vision for Bournemouth University in which it was explicitly suggested that the university supports a broad minded approach on the matter that:

- values methodologies, techniques and academic analysis from other cultures;
- discards prejudice;
  considers with sensitivity the effect of our actions on others locally and globally;

- questions Eurocentric, rich world, restricted perspectives and takes into account viewpoints and circumstances from all regions of the world;
- acknowledges the global forces that affect us all and promotes justice and equality (Bournemouth University, Global Perspectives Network, 1999: 1)

With respect to the culture and attitude changes that have been affecting university life and organisation from the research findings it was suggested that whilst the curriculum and the university staff have been much under a state of reconsidering the status and ability to adapt to new circumstances respectively, there have been difficulties concerning student involvement. Despite the university's good will to adapt to the needs of globalisation and sustainability and the existence of a quite high number of international students, it could be argued that students still act as individuals coming from different countries rather than as members of a homogenous international community (see Table 3). This was explicit through the interviews with overseas students:

> I think that culture affects the behaviour and this changes from country to country and this changes your attitudes. So it's not very easy to have a model student like the one you have just described (student from a European country)
> And to a certain extent someone should be free to have their own personality based on the place they live (overseas student)

However, it came up from the findings that students do not underestimate the capacity of globalisation to change culture values, especially with regard to how much universities can be benefited from this.

> I think further that the education system has to change because of globalisation. And this means to use internationalisation for the benefit of the university you are in. For example, to have more students especially from abroad depends on how high you are in ranking as a university (another overseas student)

Another field of activity that has been important for Bournemouth University is the one of inter-organisational changes that can provide support to the arguments about establishing sustainable development. According to the research evidence partnership working has been one of the pillars for promoting glocal perspectives in both curricular and co-curricular activities. Another aspect for inter-organisational change has been the efforts put by the university to develop mechanisms that could attract contributions by trade and inward investment (See Table 3).

ASPECTS FOR CONSIDERATION		
FUNCTIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK	Issue/Problem Identification & Causality at Bournemouth University	Prognosis/Planning & Mobilising at Bournemouth University
CULTURE CHANGES		
Learning in a Global Context (Engaging with/Adapting to)	Curriculum: Awareness has been raised through particular programme specifications University Staff: Staff seem capable of teaching/learning in an international context University Students: Despite the university's international learning context students do not seem to particularly feel 'global citizens'	Curriculum: Particular programmes within all schools that can promote sustainable development University Staff: Transferring knowledge that can promote education at a 'global citizen' level University Students: Engagement of students to commit to learning within the global context
Promoting a Culture of Global Perspectives	Curriculum: Culture has begun to change through educational programmes, conferences, dedicated groups etc (e.g. the Global Perspectives Network) University Staff: Staff seem capable of teaching/learning at the Global Perspectives' level University Students: Despite the university's international learning context students do not always appreciate the culture differences	Curriculum: Promoting change in culture through engaging in values and analysis from other cultures University Staff: Transferring knowledge that acknowledges the global forces that affect people's lives University Students: Engagement of students to learning considering the existence of different cultures
INTER-		

ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES		
Working in Partnership	Curriculum: Partnership working has been recently increased at both curricular and co-curricular levels University Staff: Evidence of partnership work e.g. at the promotion of volunteering within the university University Students: Evidence of partnership work e.g. at the promotion of volunteering within the university	Curriculum: Establishing partnerships both internally and externally University Staff: Further development of partnership work inclusive of staff University Students: Embedding partnership culture into student teaching
Contributing to Trade and Investment	Curriculum: Awareness about how global perspectives can affect the curriculum re contribution to trade and investment University Staff: Staff seem aware of how global perspectives can affect the curriculum re contribution to trade and investment University Students: No particular evidence that proves awareness on how global perspectives can affect the curriculum re contribution to trade and investment	Curriculum: Further enhancement of an ideology about 'global citizen' that would secure inward investment University Staff: Transfer of this ideology to members of staff University Students: Transfer of this ideology to students that could improve their employability

Table 3: Application of the Egalitarian Collaboration framework to Bournemouth University context

Regarding the establishment of partnership work at Bournemouth University it could be argued that it has begun since the late 1990s when the first partnership arrangements occurred at both curricular and extra-curricular level. Looking especially at the increase of volunteering activity that can support sustainable development a series of collaborative projects have been pursued in the last five years or so that can claim success. Referring to one of these projects a coordinator pointed out that:

> That makes more explicit the whole idea of individuals actually not just being responsible in terms of being learners and responsible for themselves but it develops an awareness of their working with other people in the university and working with other people in the community. I think that the spin of their community work is professional and academic as well. And I think it is professional and academic but [also] the personal development aspect they are involved in enables them to achieve their goals in partnership and cooperation with other people rather than just pushing their own agendas (Volunteer programme coordinator)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	N/A	7	9.3	9.3	9.3
	weak	1	1.3	1.3	10.7
	weak	1	1.3	1.3	12.0
	weak	3	4.0	4.0	16.0
	satisfactory	9	12.0	12.0	28.0
	satisfactory	18	24.0	24.0	52.0
	satisfactory	16	21.3	21.3	73.3
	satisfactory	10	13.3	13.3	86.7
	excellent	10	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Frequencies about evaluation of team work skills used in the Community Champions volunteering project
Source: Apostolakis (2005b)

An example of how far partnership work has been gone can be perhaps seen at Table 4 and Figure 2. The example was taken from the Community Champions project. During the implementation of a pilot programme within the remit of this project volunteers were encouraged to keep a work book overview that would

enable the volunteer committee to evaluate their progress. Based on the assessments made by the volunteers on these workbooks tables of responses were produced in order to be analysed. One of them was Table 4. As it can be seen in this table volunteers emphasised on the positive effects of team skills that were used through the various tasks they were involved. Taking into account the variety of projects (ranging from skills required to organise parties up to issues of safety awareness) and that the each volunteer had to respond to 9 of these assessment grids, it is worthwhile to notice that 83.9% of the respondents found the they were able to use their skills to the standard of 'excellent' or 'satisfactory'.
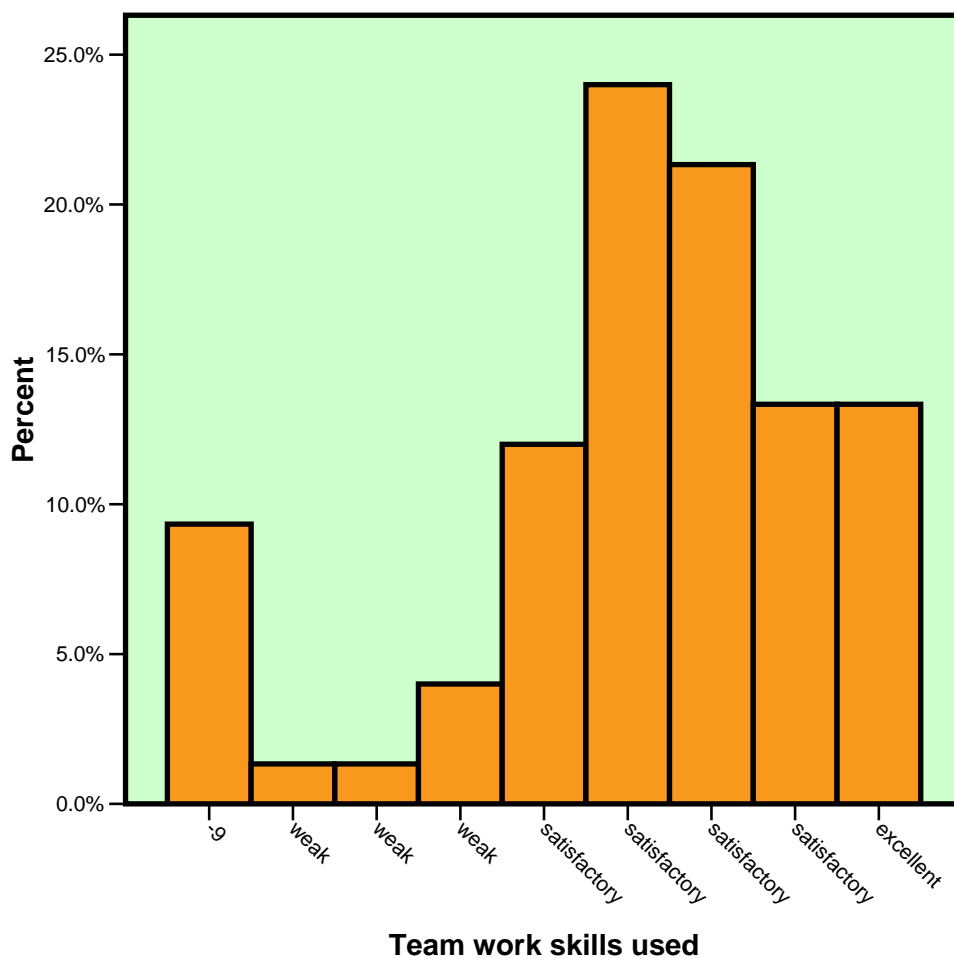

Figure 2: Graph about evaluation of team work skills used in the Community Champions volunteering project
Source: Apostolakis (2005b)

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is evident from the research that has being conducted for this paper that culture and inter organisational changes have been important steps of promoting an attitude towards sustainability as well as an attitude for the students being 'global citizens' at Bournemouth University. At least this seems to be the case re

adaptations of curricular and co-curricular activities to new circumstances. Additionally, members of staff seem to be capable of teaching/learning within the university's internationalised context. However, further steps need to be taken with respect to the degree of student involvement, which has remained low due to resistance by their side on how they would…allow culture change to affect their lives towards the creation of a 'global citizen' model of student at the university.

In doing so the university's efforts could be characterised as 'crystallised', as it can be seen from the quote below:

> I think it's actually gone very well. We've concentrated in 2 aspects really. One is developing people's self-awareness and get them to get an insight into the whole personality and how they actually operate in groups and teams. And the other is to try and develop their perspective as global citizen so that they get an understanding of the world outside the local university, the world in local communities and so they get us to understand something of the multi versions and perspective of people that they are going to work in partnership with in the community (Member of university staff and volunteer programme coordinator talking about the success of a particular volunteering project)

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